



Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program

**Joint Ministerial Statement
14th Ministerial Conference on
Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
25 September 2015**

Linking Connectivity with Economic Transformation in CAREC

Representing the Governments of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Ministers adopted the following statement at the conclusion of the 14th Ministerial Meeting on Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on 25 September 2015.

I. Better Connectivity for a More Integrated CAREC Region and Greater Diversification of the CAREC Economies

1. We exchanged views on recent economic developments that have affected our economic performance and appreciated the challenges of continuing reforms to make our economies more resilient towards sustainable growth in the long-term. We recognized the need to step up efforts to meet the increasing infrastructure requirements of economic diversification and expansion. We reaffirmed the important role of regional cooperation in promoting greater connectivity in CAREC and with its neighbors to boost trade and enhance competitiveness.

2. We welcomed the gathering of CAREC government officials, business leaders, and multilateral and bilateral development institutions in the Investment Forum held on 24 September 2015 which provided an opportunity to showcase the successes of Mongolia and other CAREC countries, and to exchange views on investment policies and business opportunities, including for infrastructure development, in the region. We are committed to make every endeavor to broaden and deepen the private sector engagement in the CAREC Program. We were encouraged by the success of the Forum organized by the ADB and the Erdenes Mongol LLC. The Investment Forum strongly reaffirmed the CAREC Program's important role in enabling investment mobilization. We were encouraged to see the CAREC Program has mobilized about \$3.7 billion of investments in 2015 leading to a cumulative investment of \$28.3 billion. We resolved to promote CAREC as an effective platform to coordinate increasing international interest in stepping up efforts in investing further in infrastructure connectivity with regional perspective.

II. Sustaining the Implementation Momentum

3. We welcomed the progress made in the four priority areas as well as the new initiatives that have been taken. In transport, we commended initiatives to develop multimodal transport corridor networks through investment projects in road and railway construction, rehabilitation

and upgrading; and through implementing a set of complementary soft sector initiatives. In energy, we endorsed the Energy Strategy and Work Plan (2016-2020) in general, in which clean energy and energy efficiency technologies have been added as a new element to support technology leapfrogging in the region. In trade facilitation, we noted the progress made in customs cooperation initiatives which demonstrates the increasing importance of the integrated approach to transport and trade facilitation, combining infrastructure connectivity with complementary policy and regulatory reforms. In trade policy, we commended the approval of the accession protocol of Kazakhstan by the General Council of the World Trade Organization (WTO) after two decades of negotiations. We were encouraged to witness CAREC countries progressing steadily towards WTO accession and post-accession adaptation. We noted the satisfactory progress being made in implementing the Almaty-Bishkek Corridor Initiative (ABCI) and looked forward to a comprehensive study identifying policy, institutional and infrastructure requirements for the development of this pilot CAREC economic corridor.

4. We supported strongly the conduct of a midterm review of the CAREC 2020 in light of economic developments in the regional and global environment of the CAREC countries and in anticipation of developing the next 10-year strategy, CAREC 2030. We requested the ADB, as CAREC Secretariat, working under the guidance of member countries, to present the review at the 15th Ministerial Conference.

III. A Platform for Action on Road Safety

5. Being cognizant of the fact that incidents of road casualties and injuries are preventable, we resolved to take collective action to improve road safety by adopting the “safe systems” approach which combines improvements in road design, safer vehicle design, enforcement of traffic laws, and provision of adequate post-collision care facilities. We committed to implement a 10-point action program for safer CAREC roads in full support of the United Nations Decade of Action on Road Safety.

IV. Safer Food, Better Trade

6. We welcomed the initiative to strengthen cooperation in sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures to complement Customs-related trade facilitation measures. We called on our Senior Officials to implement a common agenda that would facilitate the required improvements and reforms in the modernization of SPS measures consistent with international standards that facilitates safe trade.

V. CAREC Institute

7. We are pleased that the physical base of the CAREC Institute has been launched in March 2015 in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the People’s Republic of China, and that the Director has assumed his post beginning July 2015. We look forward to the active engagement of the CAREC Institute in providing knowledge support to the sector coordinating committees in the course of implementing their respective strategies and action plans, and in the generation of knowledge to foster policies promoting enhanced economic and trade cooperation in CAREC region. Work will continue towards a legal agreement based on the decisions made by the 12th and 13th Ministerial Conference to provide the CI a legal personality.

VI. Enhancing Institutional Mechanisms

8. We thank the CAREC Secretariat and the sector coordinating committees and the CAREC Institute for their dedicated support to the goals of the CAREC Program. We are grateful for the continued technical and financial support of our multilateral institution partners, and to participating bilateral development partners active in the region. We look forward to increasing engagement with the private sector to encourage innovation and enterprise, and as a partner in development finance.

Conclusions and Acknowledgement

9. The 14th CAREC Ministerial Conference marks another milestone for the CAREC Program. The new initiatives and strategies that we have endorsed today have set the bar higher for the Program. As we continue to broaden the scope of our work, and deepen our partnerships with other stakeholders, we are confident that we can help secure the future of CAREC in realizing the good prospects that the region has to offer. We appreciate the interest of the Government of Georgia in the CAREC Program and its participation as an observer at this 14th Ministerial Conference.

10. We thank the Government of Mongolia for chairing and hosting our 14th Ministerial Conference, and our Secretariat, the Asian Development Bank, for the excellent arrangements made. We look forward to our 15th meeting to be held in 2016 in Pakistan.